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General Assembly
Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

8th Plenary meeting
Wednesday, 22 September 1999, 10.00 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, President of the Republic of Honduras

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Honduras, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Facussé (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express my pleasure at your recent election, Mr. President. I also wish to acknowledge the work of your illustrious predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, also deserves acknowledgement for his untiring efforts to ensure that peace and security govern international relations in this turbulent world in which we live, always showing sensitivity and a very special concern for those who suffer the most, have the least, and therefore need the greatest care.

Almost a year ago, Central America was tragically struck by one of the most terrible hurricanes of the century. Our country, Honduras, was the most severely damaged, with billions of dollars in losses resulting from the destruction of more than 70 per cent of its infrastructure and economy. More than 15,000 people were killed, injured or went missing and more than 1.5 million suffered losses, either directly or indirectly, a high percentage of whom lost their homes, belongings and businesses in their entirety.

Those unfortunate circumstances through which we had to live, the consequences of which we have only just begun to recover from, have been aggravated in recent weeks by the severity of the winter and high levels of precipitation. Once again, the banks of our country's main rivers have overflowed, as it was not possible to dredge them because of lack of time and resources. This is again jeopardizing the safety of numerous population centres and cities, causing more flooding and mudslides and blocking the country's main transportation arteries. This has brought further insecurity and anguish to our population, adding new losses and difficulties to the already grave state of affairs we have faced since last October.

Hurricane Mitch and other natural phenomena of uncommon violence lay bare the physical vulnerability of our countries and highlight the absolute necessity of early and organized preventive measures. Such preventive measures can be achieved at the national, regional, continental and, indeed, global levels only through combined, joint efforts and resources. No country, much less a country that is poor in material resources, is up to the task of bearing the massive destructive power of these

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phenomena alone. This is a huge new challenge for the United Nations, whose diligent attention to this matter we take this opportunity to request, knowing that it stands to save thousands upon thousands of lives, spare us enormous damage, and deflect immense ills.

We, the Honduran people, have always valued the world's solidarity, for which we are most grateful, and have also learned that brotherhood among men and among nations is a value that we must not lose. On the contrary, we must revitalize, strengthen and disseminate it, especially now that globalization and high-speed communications are drawing States and continents closer together, making it possible for one nation instantly to feel the pain that afflicts another as if it affected us all directly.

More than neighbours, we must be brethren. Beyond cooperation, we must sow the seeds of brotherhood. Solidarity is a fine thing, but brotherhood is stronger and more human, because it breathes from the depth of our hearts that divine, universal breath of life with which God endows each and every one of his creatures so that we should be equal and enjoy the planet's wealth as equals.

Since its founding in 1945, the United Nations has played a preeminent role in the life of our planet. The 50 nations that met at San Francisco, California, among which the Honduran people were honoured to count ourselves, and that signed the United Nations Charter, have increased in number over the years. Some have changed, while others have disappeared as multinational or federated structures. Therefore, the challenges that the next century will place before the United Nations are new, even greater challenges, and most likely will be even more difficult and will arise ever more frequently.

The growing victories of human rights; the accelerated expansion of democracy as a system of governance and coexistence among peoples; the rights of women and children, and the imperative to protect both against abuse, discrimination and violence: these are matters that challenge the creative imagination of the world's peoples and Governments. They are paradigms for a new millennium, whose portals we approach with a watchful mind and a hopeful heart.

Peace; the environment; population growth; the abandonment of the fields and the forced, chaotic urbanization of our cities — which have thus become ruralized; issues of food; the vast differences between a small cluster of rich nations and an immense universe of nations that are in a permanent process of pauperization; and the eradication of weapons of mass destruction: these are but a few of the topics that transcend the boundaries of the centuries. These issues demand new approaches and solutions formulated in the light of the experiences that this waning century leaves us.

Now, when the end of the twentieth century enables us to be exceptionally privileged witnesses to a change of millennium, is a time for reflection, so that we may harvest the century's finest fruits and bear them across the bridge between the centuries. However, we must not carry to the other frontier of time those things that in this century have produced the great disasters of war and agonizing tensions on the international scene; nor must we hold on to those that have segregated peoples and dismembered entire States or that have spawned the marginalization and exclusion that still torment a large part of humanity.

It is of the utmost necessity, then, that fraternity should return to its rightful place in the triangle of liberal principles, the very ideals that gave birth to the rule of law and the concept of constitutionality, to harmony and equality among individuals and among nations, thus shaping democratic States and the paradigm of human freedom as the basis of the existence of humankind, its very *raison d'être* on this planet.

We say that the elder siblings among the community of nations must adopt the concept of fraternity as a principle and a guiding ethic for international coexistence with their brethren, so that together — without exclusion, without the yawning chasms that separate the great from the small, the wealthy from the impoverished — we may all cross to the other side of the millennium with a new outlook of justice, opportunity and hope, for the sake of all that we are as the human race, and for the sake of all the efforts, sacrifices and suffering expended in our attempts to dodge the blows of economic disparity and unjust treatment in finance and markets. Yet we have remained steadfast, and continue to do so through titanic efforts and countless sacrifices, to avoid being left behind by development, cultural trends and the scientific and technological benefits of transportation and communications. We have struggled for all of this while giving our heroes and martyrs to the cause of freedom; we stretch as far as we can to develop democratic rule in our States. We struggle each and every day to make democratic rule able to govern, credible, hope-inspiring and trustworthy in the eyes and hearts of the many who do not always have the patience to wait until the benefits

of the system materialize, who despair and grow weary of dreaming dreams that are difficult to attain.

For democracy to survive the times and to justify the high price that we have paid for it, it must respond to the concerns and aspirations of peoples. Protecting against regression in what so many have paid dearly to achieve; preserving the advances we have made; and finding a way to ensure that there will respond in a positive way for the benefit of peoples: these are the greatest challenges that we carry with us as we meet the coming millennium.

Central Americans have learned, through bitter experience and a painful toll of blood and sacrifice, that fraternity is a higher value than mere neighbourliness, that cooperation and understanding yield better fruit for us than past rivalries and local nationalisms and that there is no difference, however serious it may appear, that we cannot resolve in a peaceful, harmonious and civilized manner.

A few days ago the presidents of El Salvador and Honduras set a beautiful example for the continent and the world when they ratified the Convention on Nationality and Acquired Rights which covers the inhabitants of the areas delimited by the Judgment of 11 September 1992 of the International Court of Justice in the land, island and maritime frontier dispute between El Salvador and Honduras. With this action, we have resolved, definitively and in perpetuity, the frontier dispute which for many years cast a pall over our fraternal relations.

The Central American bloc is today working towards access to the United States market under conditions as advantageous as those already enjoyed by other partners to our north; also, as a region we are seeking to open up the field for ourselves in trade throughout the continent through agreements with other existing blocs and with individual nations, including Mexico and countries of South America.

Central America is preparing to cross the bridge between the millennia with all its republics more integrated with each other than ever before, identifying with each other in the common ideal of keeping ourselves united so that we are stronger, of playing a stellar role in the American continent, of turning the isthmus into a point of strategic convergence for world trade, and of writing ourselves into a success story that will serve as an example and touchstone to the world community.

The globalization process, which has accelerated over the last decade, will continue to expand, creating challenges and chances, problems and opportunities. The dizzying flows of capital which in a single day can wreak catastrophic collapse on the economies of entire countries and regions must surely merit special attention from this Organization. Our peoples fail to understand why they should be affected by breakdowns in the financial system arising out of risk-taking and speculative flows in regions of the world that are remote, alien and even unknown to them. We are affected by them although we play no part in them and are not to blame for them, yet they raise the prices of our staples, rob us of development opportunities, impoverish us even further and make life harder for us. Globalization ought to be an experience that generates broader possibilities and greater opportunities for all countries and for all people, not greater imbalances and inequalities.

In stark contrast to the elimination of customs and border posts and to equal access to markets stands the need to reinforce the identity of ethnic groups, nations, countries and regions. Cultural diversity is a source of legitimate pride, and of wealth, creativity and global complementarity. Automation of mass production cannot and should not make human behaviour, the most precious resource on our planet, automatic. Homogenizing the world's cultural diversity, by whatever means, would be as serious and unthinkable as eliminating the planet's biodiversity.

The world's age-old desire for a new world order based on peace, cooperation and fraternity between all countries rather than on a balance of arms between powerful and hegemonic States has already come to pass. Although there are still some local problems, and although some old nationalisms are once again raising the flag, the world is generally a much more peaceful and stable place than it was 100 years ago. Although small groups of terrorists are still rattling various countries in the old world and the new, the truth is that, broadly speaking, we live in a world which is more peaceful — thank God — than the one our forebears knew. That is why we must indeed acknowledge that, despite all its imperfections, the world has brought in a new world order at the end of this century and the dawn of the new, an order led by the United Nations.

In this new world order which we are seeing at the end of the second millennium, there is no more room for the struggle left us by the Cold War, much less for Europe's various hegemonies of the past three centuries. Nor is there any possibility that one State alone can dominate the rest, as neither the human capacity nor the

material resources exist to do so. Rather than the balance of compulsion upon which the politics of coexistence between the world's strongest States was based, what predominates now is multiple independence, complementarity between States and international cooperation and, of course, teamwork as much in the quest for peace as in coping with civilian crises and natural disasters.

Even a superficial look at events north and south, east and west gives us an inkling that peace, international trade and the fact that States now have no choice but to cooperate with each other have levelled the playing field in international relations: on the world stage, it is now not so much a State's economic clout or military capability that determine whether its voice is heard in the debate but rather its moral force, and especially its democratic values and its ideals in terms of protecting human rights. In our specific context here, there are no more big States and small States, just members of the world community whether committed or not to the common task of making Planet Earth a real and effective place for human happiness for everyone without exception.

With this in mind Honduras, together with the other representatives of this great community, the United Nations, celebrates the new world order in which all of us are needed and are even indispensable to maintaining and developing it. A crisis between one State and another, or any internal difficulties arising out of conflicts rooted in inequity or because of nationalist, racial or religious demands, are no longer matters to be shrugged off.

On the contrary, today, with the globalized view of the Earth, each State assumes responsibility for its own protection, not merely for its own sake, but because in that way it guarantees the life and happiness of humankind for centuries to come.

Difficulties such as those in East Timor, the crisis in Kosovo, the increasing nuclearization of the Indian subcontinent or the rise in terrorism in Colombia and Russia are issues that concern us all. Although not all countries participate in each peacekeeping and humanitarian mission, there is a disposition and openness in each and every one of their inhabitants to respond to the calls for international solidarity, whose strongest voice is that of the United Nations, and especially that of its Secretary-General. In the Sahara, for several years now Honduran soldiers have participated in peacekeeping missions under United Nations command. We are sure that, like us, no other country skimps when it comes to offering cooperation and making sacrifices.

Both the intervention of the Security Council in the Kosovo conflict just recently and the organization of an international peacekeeping force for East Timor illustrate the efficacy of this system, which makes all of us brethren, neighbours, friends and partners.

It is undeniable that, even as the world has changed and with obvious respect among all States, the United Nations still operates using the mechanisms that were established at its founding in 1945. The limited number of Member States on the Security Council leaves out other States that, because of their contribution to the development of the world, should participate in the high-level decisions of that important organism of our Organization.

Likewise, we believe it is time to provide alternatives so that the veto power enjoyed by certain States is limited to certain matters and certain circumstances, and so that the mere protection of private interests does not have excessive influence or provide justification for aggressions directed at the rest of the world community. To end the practice whereby the veto serves as the Organization's last word should be a goal to which all of the States represented here dedicate ample time and consideration.

The incorporation of three new Members into this Organization fills us with joy and hope, while inspiring confidence that the Organization will treat the Republic of China in the same manner — that, as Taiwan expects, the new world order will be reflected in greater respect for the rights and values of Taiwan's inhabitants, including renewed respect for its aspirations to participate fully in the greatest human organization on Earth. I do not wish to miss this opportunity to express the solidarity of the people of Honduras and of all Central America with the people of Taiwan as they suffer the terrible misfortune that is afflicting that sister region of the world.

To summarize, with regard to the new world order, which we hope will prevail in this global forum, Honduras supports broader representation of the peoples and the nations of the world, and a more just and balanced representation in the discussions and decisions of the United Nations.

Almost a year ago, my country was lashed by the most fearsome and destructive hurricane in history. Along with causing suffering among a noble and stoical people, the tragedy made evident the sensitivity and diligence of international cooperation and fraternity. Marked by authentic sincerity and dedication to the highest values of brotherhood, in which we profoundly believe, messages of concern poured in from all over the world, along with assistance, which continues to flow, enabling the people and Government to reconstruct what the hurricane wrecked.

Thanks to that fraternity, we have moved forward in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction and created a foundation for the transformation of Honduras — and the same applies to Central America. I hereby declare that we, the people of Honduras — with the tears from this recent and painful event still fresh, and while facing a new round of anguish — are back on our feet, brimming with the vibrant spirit of utmost hope, ready to become a success story in this world, to convert tragedy into opportunity.

Regarding the cooperation that most of the countries present here have offered and continue to offer us, we take this occasion, on behalf of the Honduran people and the Government over which I preside by the sovereign will of its citizens, to extend our most heartfelt gratitude to all, and likewise to confirm before the Assembly Honduras's desire to reciprocate — in a way that is commensurate with the greatness of its heart and the legitimacy of its democratic institutions — for all that the world has with such deep affection provided us in our time of trouble.

All I would add is our most respectful request that cooperating institutions and nations expedite the resources and projects that they have committed to Honduras's reconstruction, which we urgently require now more than ever.

On this occasion our country, never forgetting that it is a founding Member of the United Nations, calls for a reform of our Organization so that a new order, based on worldwide cooperation and fraternity, can guarantee for all of us that the Earth was created not for the strongest and the most powerful, but for all human beings.

May God bless all nations. May God illuminate us all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Luis Angel González Macchi, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Luis Angel González Macchi, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Paraguay, His Excellency Mr. Luis Angel González Macchi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President González Macchi (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to greet the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, whom I congratulate on his election and offer all the cooperation of the delegation of Paraguay in his work.

In greeting Secretary-General Kofi Annan, I congratulate him on his excellent work for the Organization and reaffirm the full support of the Republic of Paraguay for his efforts on behalf of world peace.

At the same time, the delegation of Paraguay wishes to welcome the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to membership of the United Nations. We are convinced that their work will contribute to international peace and development and that their presence among us is further evidence of the universalization foreseen under the Charter.

This regular session of the General Assembly finds Paraguay at a crucial moment in its political life and for its expectations for economic and social development. The Paraguayans have very recently overcome internal destabilization. However, a rapid, broad and heroic mobilization of the citizenry, in particular the members of Parliament, youth, workers and peasants, formed an impenetrable barrier against an attempt to foment a constitutional collapse and provided support for the resistance to this attack on democracy.

As a result of the crisis of March 1999, the gravity and importance of which caused it to be followed by the media throughout the world, a Government of national unity was established in the framework of the National Constitution. That Government, which I have the honour to represent before this Assembly, is composed of all political parties through democratically elected parliamentarians. Today, it faces the great challenge of pulling Paraguay out of chronic economic stagnation and great social inequity.

In various international forums, and yet again in this arena of brotherhood among the States of the world, Paraguay appeals for the solidarity and cooperation of the multilateral and bilateral organizations in carrying out its economic reactivation programme and the implementation of social and anti-poverty policies. This activity will be the basis and guarantee of the survival of our democracy.

In this context, for the first time in my country's recent history, the political parties, the authorities of the State and the representatives of civil society have agreed in a patriotic consensus on policies and strategies to rechannel economic growth, alleviate poverty, combat social exclusion and achieve well-being for our people. Democracy, as an ideal form of organization and coexistence, will be insured for history by sustainable development, which will guarantee the material well-being of the impoverished majority.

In this respect, my country has subscribed to and fully supports the principles, objectives and measures adopted at the United Nations Conferences on social development, population and development, and women. We are unswervingly committed to political democracy because we know that we must consolidate it with justice, social equity, economic growth and sustainable development. My Government is firmly decided to participate and act jointly with other countries of the world at all levels to enhance natural resources and preserve the environment as an irreplaceable framework for human development.

In a significant response to the requirements of the Cairo Conference, Paraguay has adopted a national plan and a Council for Reproductive Health. With the establishment of the Women's Secretariat, we have strengthened women's presence in government and made available a programme for women's equality in education. This measure has allowed us to incorporate gender equality into educational reform and to adopt a women's equal-opportunity plan.

We have attributed equal importance to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the commitments made at the Children's Summit. In this respect, the Executive Power has submitted a code for minor's for parliamentary approval.

Clearly, these important steps have had a positive effect. Paraguay today, according to the most recent report of the United Nations Development Programme, is in a comparatively improved position that favours its human development indicators.

The dynamic of today's world is an unavoidable challenge demanding not only domestic democratic cooperation, but also negotiations that will raise countries to a level of development at which they can work with other regional and multilateral partners.

Convinced of this, Paraguay, freely and in full sovereignty, has decided to join the great Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) project, a regional experiment that has proved to be a useful instrument for addressing the challenges of an ever-changing world economy. Thus, we look forward to the opening of negotiations to establish a free-trade zone between MERCOSUR and the European Union. Similarly, Paraguay is actively participating in the ambitious Free Trade Area of the Americas, an undertaking that will have enormous repercussions for the American continent.

In its decisive struggle for comprehensive progress, my country is participating with renewed hope and great faith in the ideals that formed the basis for the establishment and existence of the United Nations. We therefore reaffirm our full commitment to the principles of multilateralism, equal sovereignty of States and respect for the legal order that support the essential principles of the Organization.

In this respect, Paraguay is examining the process of change and the strengthening of this Organization. We will support all efforts to improve its efficiency and operational capacity to maintain peace and contribute to the human development of all peoples.

Nevertheless, my country believes that the structure of the United Nations must be made less costly and more efficient. The Organization should strengthen the Economic and Social Council, continue to streamline the Secretariat and reduce the overlap of its specialized agencies, through efficient rationalization of the flow of resources for cooperation for sustainable development.

Given the challenges facing the United Nations, we attach considerable importance to the adoption of measures to ensure the good financial functioning of its organs, and we therefore urge Member States, particularly the most developed, to meet their financial obligations as an essential prerequisite for the reform of the Organization.

Similarly, the Government of my country does not consider that the present composition of the Security Council reflects the presence of all the main actors of the international community, nor that its numbers are in proportion to the totality of Members. Only an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent Members will ensure more equitable participation within the Security Council and, thus the necessary political balance. In that respect, the progressive process of international democratization must conclude with the elimination of the right of veto of its permanent members.

Therefore, Paraguay supports the aspiration of Latin America and other continents to have greater representation in the Council, where the presence of Brazil as a permanent member, could represent the great interests of our region.

Paraguay is convinced that maintaining international peace and security must continue to be one of the priorities of the United Nations, in particular in those areas of conflict where its intervention can contribute decisively to stabilizing the situation on the ground and achieving peace.

As proof of its commitment to these noble purposes, the Government of Paraguay has officially offered the Secretary-General the participation of members of its armed forces in United Nations peacekeeping operations, a decision which will contribute to this noble humanitarian purpose. To that end, a battalion of elite officers of the Paraguay army is receiving special training to participate in those operations, in accordance with the memorandum of understanding to be signed between the Republic of Paraguay and the United Nations.

However, we truly believe that the best guarantee of peace, together with the monitoring of human rights and equal opportunity for development, is to reduce armaments progressively and in a sustained manner until they are totally eliminated.

Paraguay strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms, regarding it as one of the most serious threats to our societies. In that respect, we have supported all the United Nations initiatives to counteract this scourge, making clear our resolve to prevent it, combat it and eliminate it. It is timely to recall that my country has itself suffered from the effects of this terrible scourge; in this very year we have suffered the horrendous assassination of the Vice-President of the Republic, Luis María Argaña. I take this opportunity for the President of the Republic of Paraguay to thank the General Assembly for the tribute which was paid to him. Paraguay will not cease its struggle to eradicate terrorist bands, which are alien to our tradition and our history.

With regard to other scourges which afflict our societies, I must emphasize with great satisfaction the efforts which my country is making in the crusade against illicit drug-trafficking and related crimes, a struggle which is carried out with the greatest cooperation. The twentieth special session of the United Nations, on the question of drugs, held in New York in June 1998, conveyed in its decisions that spirit, which should lead us inexorably to the final destruction of the merchants of death, a victory which will be achieved with the shared responsibility of the nations committed to the crusade.

These purposes will be achieved with the faithful fulfilment of the commitments undertaken with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this respect, my country has followed the recommendations of the United Nations with regard to signing, adhering to and ratifying those commitments, whose purpose it is to strengthen the framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of the individual. International legal instruments in this regard form part of the law in the Republic of Paraguay.

For that reason, my Government accepts verification and monitoring by organizations concerned with the protection of human rights, thus complying with the provisions of the covenants which it has ratified, as a commitment of its will to fulfil them. We must note here that Paraguay has just received a visit from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which arrived in the country in response to an invitation by the Government.

With regard to the priorities of justice concerning crimes of international scope, we find it very satisfactory to note a most promising event: the approval in 1998 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to pass judgement on individuals accused of the crimes which most offend the human conscience. Paraguay, being one of the signatories, has submitted this document for parliamentary approval.

Furthermore, Paraguay, whose population includes 15 per cent of foreigners, the majority of whom live in border areas, free of segregation or discrimination, notes with satisfaction that the problem of the Balkans is moving back to its natural ambit, the United Nations Security Council, which must necessarily approve any decision.

Our permanent, determined support for the Conference on Disarmament is one of the pillars of our international policy. Paraguay, which supported the process of decolonization and the autonomy of peoples from the time the United Nations was established, has followed with great concern the events in East Timor. I sincerely hope that with the efforts of the United Nations, the best solution will be found to the problem, with the consecration of the rights of this people, legitimized in the referendum and encouraged by our Organization.

My country has firmly decided to keep to the essential principles of coexistence and civilization; this is a necessary result of its belonging to the international community. Following the principle of universality, Paraguay supports the right of all the peoples of the world to make their voices heard at the United Nations.

Paraguay believes that the situation in the China Strait must be resolved within the framework of international law, non-aggression and peaceful coexistence of nations.

I cannot fail to state here that we share the sorrow of the people of the Republic of China at the catastrophe afflicting its territory. We must all commit ourselves to offering cooperation and help to achieve its full recovery.

In my country there is an unswerving commitment to democracy and the belief that this can be consolidated only through justice, social equity, economic growth and sustainable development. That is why my Government has resolved to participate and act together with other countries in all efforts aimed at preserving natural resources and the environment, an indispensable task for comprehensive development. For the same reasons, in this year when humanity will achieve the surprising figure of six billion inhabitants in the world, we, the Heads of State and Government and political leaders and officials have the historic responsibility to respond to the needs and expectations of this huge world population. But let us not do it with hunger, thirst, wars, terrorism, discrimination, genocide, tyranny and injustice — let us do it with responsibility, with positive actions, and with security for the human person.

On the threshold of the new millennium, Paraguay is prepared to participate in this urgent task of improving human civilization.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luis Ángel González Macchi, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Latvia, Her Excellency Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Vike-Freiberga (Latvia) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to address the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, and its President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. You may be assured, Sir, of my highest respect, and may I extend to you my best wishes for success in your efforts.

This fifty-fourth Assembly, the last before the year 2000, inevitably gives us food for thought. On the one hand, it urges us to turn to the achievements and the major successes of which the United Nations can rightly be proud. On the other hand, it urges us to rise to all the challenges which the new millennium will not fail to put before us. May our debates here help establish peace and security throughout the world, settle conflicts and develop innovative solutions to the problems we will have to face.

The noble ideals which have guided the United Nations over the years have neither become outdated nor lost their relevance. Peace in the world, combating poverty, defending human rights — this is a programme which is still in force and whose goals could not be more clear-cut. It is rather like the struggle of the mythical hero against the Hydra: he cuts off one head and nine

more grow in its place. Nevertheless, we cannot possibly give up the fight and we must not drop our guard, not if the world we wish to build is a civilized one.

(*spoke in English*)

The fifty-fourth General Assembly of the United Nations is being held at a time when the United Nations system has experienced a certain amount of strain and is faced with important challenges. These have given rise to questions about the effectiveness and the very relevance of this body within the contemporary international system. This scepticism ranges from concerns about the capability of the Organization to address regional conflicts and the needs of the developing world, to concerns about budgetary management problems. No doubt there is some basis for each of those concerns. Nevertheless, they should not undermine the fundamental importance of a truly global Organization which over a period of decades has earned respect around the world. Our ranks are constantly growing, and the United Nations continues to approach the goal of truly worldwide representation.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga upon their admission to United Nations membership.

The reform process of the United Nations is under way, and my country, Latvia, fully supports it. After all, Member States are the ones that set the agenda of the Organization, and it will be the quality and commitment of each State that will ultimately determine the success or failure of our common efforts.

Some of the negative feelings about the United Nations stem from excessive expectations. One cannot view the United Nations as a panacea, particularly where decisions on long-lasting regional problems are concerned or when preventive actions on a regional level are long overdue. Yet even in those situations a modern United Nations system is expected to seek earlier and more effective involvement than was the case in South-East Europe, East Timor or the Middle East. It must be stressed that the painful refugee crisis of Kosovo could not possibly be resolved without the direct involvement of the United Nations and its institutions. But, sadly, the maximum potential of the United Nations cannot always be utilized because of prejudice, lack of political will or perceived political ambitions. Let us not forget that the costs of our reluctance to take action are extremely high: too often our reluctance results in the deaths of innocent people and is the cause of wholesale destruction which may take years and decades to remedy.

The topical issues of cooperation, conflict prevention, non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, humanitarian questions, environmental protection, poverty eradication and gender equality need to be addressed on a global scale. Without a doubt, the United Nations and its institutions must play an increasingly important role in resolving these issues. Since the mandate of the United Nations is to serve humanity, the United Nations should observe the principle of universality. The United Nations capacity for conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy is by no means exhausted and further attention should be paid to fostering the observance of these preventive principles throughout the world.

Even as we speak here today, many people in this world are suffering at the hands of terrorists or live under terrorist threat. Any instances of terrorism should be universally condemned, and steps must be taken to strengthen the international response to this problem.

For the United Nations to become a truly modern Organization, it must reflect the new realities of a changed international context. Reform of the Security Council remains central to the revitalization programme of the United Nations and should reflect both the needs of the international community and present-day realities. The acquisition or possession of nuclear weapons must no longer be the basis for super-Power status, and the future model of the Council will have to reflect this reality. That model should also make the Council more open to the views and contributions of smaller States and non-permanent members.

How does Latvia see its contribution to the new United Nations? My country is one of those nations that could not be a part of the United Nations at its inception; because freedom of choice was forbidden our people when Latvia lost its independence in 1940, we have special respect for this principle today. We also reserve a special place in our hearts for the United Nations because it was the first international Organization which we joined after the restoration of independence in 1991. It was a moment of celebration, pride and even euphoria as justice prevailed and a long struggle to join the community of nations finally came to an end.

But our people quickly realized that we were now setting out along a new road. After a 50-year delay,

Latvia was faced with the task of becoming an equal, responsible and contributing member of a new Europe and a new, globalized international community.

Membership in the United Nations was just the first step along that road towards reasserting our national and our human rights. More importantly, we recognized our responsibility to help other nations setting out on this path.

Yet, even at the very end of this century, we still encounter thinking which a priori denies the right of nations to choose their own destiny. Thankfully, such views are becoming less and less acceptable as the years go by. For Latvia, as a free and sovereign nation, the last few years have been a remarkably successful period of active integration into the international community, of internal restructuring, of wide-ranging reforms and societal regeneration. Fifty years of occupation have left us with a heavy social, economic and psychological legacy, but we have made tremendous efforts to overcome this in every way. The support offered by the United Nations in this onerous task has been of enormous significance and I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate the heartfelt appreciation of Latvia for the invaluable assistance provided by the United Nations.

During this century Latvia has made a remarkable turnaround. It has gone from the depths of tragedy to the heights of success. In a few short years, Latvia has grown into a politically stable State with strong democratic institutions and practices. Latvia has restored a thriving market economy and a deep respect for individual rights and freedoms. Over the past few years and with the help of the international community, Latvia has attached particular importance to the process of forming a fully integrated, harmonious society. It is a challenging but critically important task for my country, the more so because of the burdens imposed by our historical legacy. We perceive it as an ongoing process that involves many cultural and educational aspects and includes the important element of the individual's right to choose. Our goal is to give each resident of our country an equal opportunity to contribute to a civic identity that shares common goals and values with all Europe. As part of this programme, my country will continue to attach particular importance to strengthening the role of the Latvian language and incorporating minorities into the everyday affairs of the country.

Latvia believes in complementarity between regional and global efforts. For Latvia, integration into Europe remains a high priority but it is not the end of the road. Integration into the transatlantic security alliance would be a prudent step but not a sufficient one. For Latvia to succeed, and for the people of Latvia to have the full opportunity they deserve to live secure, healthy and prosperous lives, Latvia must be integrated into the political, business and intellectual exchange of the global community.

We are very proud that on 10 February 1999 Latvia became the first Baltic State to join the World Trade Organization as a full-fledged member.

Within the range of its capabilities, Latvia has participated in peace operations in the Balkans and has contributed to relieving the suffering of Kosovo refugees.

Latvia has been an active contributor to United Nations revitalization through its membership in the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights.

Latvia has put forward its candidature for the Security Council elections in 2005. This spring my country signed the Statute of the International Criminal Court and is currently planning the ratification process.

A very visible indication of our appreciation of the work of the United Nations and a concrete manifestation of Latvia's support for the Secretary General's programme for United Nations reform is our donation of a historic, fully renovated building in the centre of our capital as a shared home for all United Nations agencies in Latvia. On 16 July this year, and as one of my first official functions as President, I had the pleasure of participating in the official inauguration of the United Nations House in Riga, one of the first United Nations Houses in Europe and the very first in our region.

I should like to express my country's full support for the proposed Millennium Assembly of 2000 and trust that it will become a landmark in setting our sights for the twenty-first century.

May the results of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly advance our common cause at the dawn of the new millennium.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now call on the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, His Excellency Mr. Joschka Fischer.

Mr. Fischer (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text furnished by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in this difficult office.

I should also like to thank Foreign Minister Opertti for his tireless dedication in successfully presiding over the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

I welcome Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga, with which Germany has long enjoyed friendly ties, as new Members of the world Organization.

I endorse the statement of my Finnish colleague, Tarja Halonen, on behalf of the European Union.

This session of the General Assembly is the last in this "century of extremes", as the British historian Eric Hobsbawm called the century now drawing to a close. That is reason enough to take stock. Since its foundation, the United Nations has greatly enhanced relations between peoples. The development of international law, protection of human rights, decolonization, worldwide humanitarian and disaster aid, arousing awareness of the great problems facing mankind, such as population growth, poverty and the global environmental crisis — all of this would be inconceivable without the United Nations.

There is no alternative to the United Nations objectives and values — peace, human rights, freedom, justice and development — and they have gained worldwide recognition, even if, unfortunately, they are not always respected everywhere. Nevertheless, even after more than 50 years, there is still a long way to go before they are universally respected and implemented. Despite all its efforts, the international community has not yet succeeded in ridding our planet of war, oppression, tyranny, expulsion and grave human rights violations, including genocide. At the close of this century, the United Nations and its Member States are unable to fully master their core task, namely, safeguarding peace and security. The great hope that following the end of the East-West conflict the era of multilateral cooperation and worldwide rule of law would dawn has not yet come to fruition.

Today the question of peacekeeping must be considered under conditions very different to those during the United Nations early years. First, most conflicts today are internal rather than international, as in earlier times. Secondly, the role of the nation State has been considerably relativized by the increased importance of human rights and the globalization of the economy and society. Against this background, the question of peacekeeping arises more and more in an area of tension between traditional State sovereignty and protection of human rights.

What is to be done when entire States collapse and the civilian population is massacred in never-ending civil wars from all sides? What if ethnic tensions in a State are partly provoked by criminal Governments, which then respond with pogroms, mass expulsions and mass murders, even genocide? Should the United Nations then regard State sovereignty as more important than protection of individuals and their rights? Rwanda, Kosovo and East Timor are dramatic examples of this.

In many ways, therefore, the Kosovo conflict represents a turning point. The international community could no longer tolerate a State waging war against its own people and using terror and expulsion as a political instrument. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his brilliant and trail-blazing speech to the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights, no Government has the right to use the cover of the principle of State sovereignty to violate human rights. Non-interference in internal affairs must no longer be misused as a shield for dictators and murderers. The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna reaffirmed this in 1993, with the approval of all United Nations Members States, with the words:

> "the promotion and protection of all human rights is a legitimate concern of the international community". (*Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, I, para. 4*)

However, the Kosovo conflict also marks a change of direction in the development of international relations. How will the international community decide in the

future — this question has just been raised once more in East Timor — when it comes to preventing massive human rights violations against an entire people? Two developments are conceivable.

A practice of humanitarian interventions could evolve outside the United Nations system. This would be a very problematic development. The intervention in Kosovo, which took place in a situation where the Security Council had tied its own hands after all efforts to find a peaceful solution had failed, was intended to provide emergency assistance and, ultimately, to protect the displaced Kosovo Albanians. The unity of the European States and the Western Alliance, as well as various Security Council resolutions, were of crucial significance here. However, this step, which is only justified in this special situation, must not set a precedent for weakening the United Nations Security Council's monopoly on authorizing the use of legal international force. Nor must it become a licence to use external force under the pretext of humanitarian assistance. This would open the door to the arbitrary use of power and anarchy and throw the world back to the nineteenth century.

The only solution to this dilemma, therefore, is to further develop the existing United Nations system in such a way that in the future it is able to intervene in good time in cases of very grave human rights violations, but not until all means of settling conflicts peacefully have been exhausted and — this is a crucial point — within a strictly limited legal and controlled framework.

In the twenty-first century the individual and his rights must take a more prominent place alongside the rights of States in the concept of security as defined by the international community. The reform of the Security Council, the central body for safeguarding world peace, must be oriented towards this principle. The Security Council is, in fact, authorized to act, and able to do so, where peace or security are at risk due to internal developments. This has been demonstrated by a long chain of decisions, from the apartheid resolution to the interventions in Iraq, Bosnia and Haiti. However, in Rwanda, Kosovo and the Congo, decision making in the Security Council was blocked, thus rendering it unable to live up to its responsibilities enshrined in the United Nations Charter, with disastrous results for the peoples in question.

These conflicts are a pressing reason, particularly in view of the important Millennium General Assembly, to finally carry out the long-overdue substantial reform of the Security Council. The Security Council must be adapted to the new realities of the global political situation. It must have a more representative composition and, above all, it must be equipped to react to the crises and conflicts of today. Reform must involve enlargement to include both more permanent and non-permanent members, as well as a strengthening of its decision-making powers. As the Assembly knows, Germany has for some time now expressed its willingness to assume more and lasting responsibility in this connection. We stand by this unreservedly.

In the debate on reform we must not avoid the issue of the permanent members' right of veto, a question of key importance for the Security Council's capability to act. The right of veto is regarded by many as outdated in its current form. However, it is a situation with which we have to reckon internationally for a long time to come. How then can decision-making in the Security Council be made more efficient?

According to the Charter, the Security Council acts with the mandate, and on behalf, of all United Nations Member States. But hitherto they have not been entitled to learn why a State has exercised its right of veto. This is not only neither democratic nor transparent, but also makes it easier for States to veto a draft resolution unilaterally for national rather than international interests. The introduction of an obligation for a State to explain to the General Assembly why it is vetoing a draft resolution would make it more difficult to do so and thus bring about substantial progress towards using the right of veto more responsibly. Why should not the General Assembly assume more responsibility in the future, too?

A second approach to making the international peacekeeping system more efficient would be via Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, namely by strengthening the regional security systems and redistributing tasks and areas of responsibility among them and the United Nations. It is becoming clear that the regional organizations could be allocated an even greater implementation role. This would also foster the capabilities of regional organizations to engage in security cooperation, as well as their collaboration with the United Nations. However, the primacy of the Security Council remains absolutely essential.

Without reforms in the area of peacekeeping, the Security Council will be circumvented more and more frequently, resulting in the erosion of the Security Council and, ultimately, of the entire United Nations

system. The United Nations, one of civilization's greatest achievements this century, as well as the values and principles it represents, would thus be at risk of subsiding into insignificance. We must prevent that.

The disaster in East Timor is currently demonstrating how necessary close cooperation is between a Security Council capable of taking action and the countries in the region. The Security Council's mandate to send a multilateral peacekeeping force must be fully implemented. Indonesia must now cooperate closely with the United Nations Mission and do everything in its power to guarantee its success. The bloodshed must end. The victims must be helped. Those displaced must be able to return home safely. Germany has already provided humanitarian and food aid. We will send a medical corps to assist the peacekeeping troops and make further contributions towards rebuilding the destroyed country. I am confident that our Parliament will lend this plan its full backing.

In Africa, the Great Lakes region, the Congo and Sierra Leone have for many years been the scene of terrible wars, mass murders, destruction and much suffering on the part of refugees. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) have done much to contain and resolve these conflicts. However, these organizations also need the support of the United Nations, in Sierra Leone, in the Congo and, in particular, in the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Both parties to the conflict must observe the agreements concluded and work closely together with the United Nations and the OAU so that the peace process now begun can be brought to a successful conclusion.

The international community must focus on the causes rather than merely the symptoms of wars and conflicts in the context of multilateral peacekeeping. Secretary-General Kofi Annan rightly called for a "culture of prevention" to be developed in order to prevent the outbreak of wars and avert natural disasters more effectively in future.

Everyone knows how difficult the transition from the "culture of reaction" to the "culture of prevention" will be. It takes a lot of persuading to summon up the political and economic will for measures intended to prevent something which we hope will never happen. However, on financial grounds and, above all, on humanitarian grounds, it is our duty and responsibility to revise our thinking here. Progress is urgently required in four areas.

First, we must move on from early warning to early response. The United Nations has considerable resources at its disposal for preventive diplomacy, which must be used even more. There is also a great potential for synergy in cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

Secondly, peacekeeping operations must be carried out before conflicts erupt. The United Nations mission in Macedonia has set a standard in this respect.

Thirdly, disarmament and the non-proliferation of means of mass destruction are in need of fresh political impetus. It is essential that the Geneva negotiations gain momentum, particularly in the fields of global nuclear disarmament and the verification of biological weapons, and in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Furthermore, Germany advocates the adoption of a convention on preventing the illegal transfer of small arms worldwide.

Fourthly, peace-building is a prevention task of growing importance. With the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the United Nations is facing one of the most comprehensive tests in its history. Building public order by creating an efficient judicial system and quickly sending the pledged international police units is now crucial. Since the United Nations began incorporating national police units in the international standby system, they have been able to act more swiftly. We must continue along this path.

Protection of human rights and the growing democratization of States form the basis for a preventive peace policy and civil conflict management. It is a historical fact that democracies with a well-developed civil society hardly ever wage war against each other. Lasting economic success cannot be achieved in the globalized information society of tomorrow without good governance founded on human rights, the separation of powers and a functioning legal and constitutional framework.

In the field of human rights, welcome progress has been made towards broadening the legal basis for international relations, particularly during the last year. The detention of Pinochet and the indictment of Milosevic by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia are milestones along the path towards creating a world in which the rule of law prevails. In future, dictators and perpetrators of human rights violations will no longer be able to rely on not being

called to account for their actions. This must also apply to the murderers of Dili and those who issued the orders. Just like everywhere else in the world, internal peace is contingent upon justice.

The adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court represented a quantum leap in the development of international law. I call upon all States to respect the integrity of the Rome Statute, to sign it and to swiftly ratify it, so that the Court can commence work next year.

Germany is doing all it can to bring about progress in the following fields of human rights. The heinous crimes of child trafficking and child prostitution must be banned throughout the world, as must the use of child soldiers. In the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, the age limit must be raised to 18.

In many countries women are still largely without rights and protection and subjected to discrimination and violence. This is an unacceptable injustice. Unfortunately, our world is still a long way from genuine equality, even with regard to fundamental rights. We must therefore aim to adopt the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In our view, the death penalty cannot be justified either ethically or legally. Together with its European partners, Germany will therefore continue to vigorously work towards ensuring the implementation of the joint resolution on abolishing the death penalty.

Protection of press freedom must be improved. The freedom to inform is a reliable gauge of respect for human rights. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right to freedom of opinion. However, censorship, intimidation and reprisals are the order of the day in many countries. It is particularly shocking that year after year dozens of journalists are killed while on assignment. The United Nations should take a closer look at this issue and consider practical solutions as well as enhance legal protection for journalists. To this end we will shortly be extending invitations to a conference to be held in Germany.

The United Nations third major task alongside peacekeeping and promoting human rights in the coming century will be to bring about a reconciliation between rich and poor countries.

The tenth *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme came to the sad conclusion that globalization has further widened the gap between rich and poor countries. The international community must endeavour to counter this trend. The development of the poorer and the poorest countries must not be left to the invisible hand of the global market. The individual, not the market, must be the focus of the globalization debate. This will also require greater steering at the political level.

The rich countries have a responsibility to help poor countries take advantage of globalization and enable them to have a fairer share of the world economy by assisting them with internal reforms and by opening up markets. Within the framework of its European Union and Group of 8 presidencies, Germany launched substantial initiatives, which must be further developed in the form of the 1999 Köln Debt Initiative and the commencement of negotiations on a follow-up arrangement for the Lomé Convention.

Development cooperation in the broadest sense must become one of the United Nations core tasks to a greater degree than hitherto. Science and technology are geared far too much to the problems of rich countries. Why do we not make greater use of the United Nations framework to build bridges here? The economist Jeffrey Sachs made the interesting suggestion, for example, that a millennium vaccine fund could be established, with guaranteed markets in the future for vaccines against tropical viruses such as tuberculosis, malaria and, above all, AIDS. Furthermore, in the context of the emergence of a global knowledge society, the international regime for the protection of intellectual property must be revised in order to ensure that the world's poor do not lose a large part of their rights and freedoms in the near future. Rich and poor countries should get together with one another more frequently to discuss such proposals. During its presidency of the Group of Eight, Germany made a start by meeting the non-aligned countries and the Group of 77.

The destruction of the environment has long since ceased to be a soft issue, but, rather, has become a very hard question which will have an increasingly strong impact on international security. According to the new study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), global warming and water shortages will be the biggest problems facing humanity in the coming century. UNEP also rightly draws attention to the close connection between environmental destruction, poverty and excessive

consumption. The deadlock in the climate protection negotiations must finally be overcome and the Kyoto Protocol implemented. The destruction of the rain forest must be stopped and further desertification prevented, and we must halt the squandering of our planet's natural resources and switch to renewable energy as quickly as possible. The world does not have much time left to remap a course towards sustainability. This will also require a much more active population policy, including a long-term strategy to deal with the ageing of our world's population. The International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted in 1982, is in need of urgent revision. We intend to hold a ministerial conference in Germany on this issue under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Europe.

With the leap into the next millennium, the nation State principle will continue to diminish in importance. It will no longer be possible to find answers to major global problems within the framework of the traditional nation state. Rather, this will take place in a strengthened international structure and with a transfer of power to international organizations, with the United Nations at their head. This will entail a transformation of traditional power into justice, the reconciliation of interests and a greater role for civil society in the international political system, with the ever-greater involvement of representatives of civil society and industry. Reaching agreement on minimum standards with regard to social issues — on the issue of child labour, for example — will be possible in many cases only in a global context. I support the proposal put forward by Secretary-General Kofi Annan that a global pact on common values and principles be concluded within the framework of a public/private partnership, between the United Nations and major companies, in order to lend the law of the market a human face.

The United Nations must become the core of effective global governance. Strengthening the United Nations, which must begin by guaranteeing its financial basis, is therefore one of Germany's most important foreign policy objectives.

During the past 50 years, and for the first time in its history, Germany has been opting wholeheartedly for integration into multilateral structures, thereby achieving democracy, freedom and reunification. Today, out of a sense of deep conviction and historical responsibility, our country is committed to peaceful reconciliation of interests and to multilateralism. We are taking this conviction with us to our old and new capital, Berlin. In the international State system of tomorrow the answer to the challenges of globalization will come from multilateralism alone. Our world will always be plural, and no form of unilateralism can therefore work in the long run. For that reason, the twenty-first century, with its more than 6 billion people and their States, will need a United Nations that is capable of taking action. The United Nations and its Members can therefore be certain that we Germans will be their staunchest allies in the efforts to strengthen the United Nations.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Mr. Tang Jiaxuan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Tang Jiaxuan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Please allow me to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. I am confident that with your wisdom and experience, you will be able to accomplish your lofty mission successfully. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Opertti for the contribution he made as President of the General Assembly at its previous session. I also wish to take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga on their admission to the membership of the United Nations.

The current session of the General Assembly is of special significance, as it is the last one of this century. A review of the past may help us predict the future. In retrospect, during the past century humanity, on the one hand, created unprecedented material wealth and culture and, on the other, suffered from the scourge of two world wars and the ordeal of the cold war, which lasted for almost 50 years. Since the end of the cold war, the world has been moving towards multipolarity and the overall international situation has started to relax. The maintenance of peace, the pursuit of stability and the promotion of development have become the common aspiration and demand of the people of all countries. Nevertheless, the harsh reality suggests that the world is far from tranquil. The cold-war mentality still lingers on. Hegemonism and power politics have manifested themselves in new expressions. Military blocs are being expanded and reinforced, and there is an increasing tendency towards military intervention. Triggered by ethnic, religious and territorial issues, regional conflicts and disputes continue to emerge one after another. The conflict between the North and the South has become ever more acute. The gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow. World peace is still elusive, and development faces even more serious challenges.

Hegemonism and power politics are the root causes of the turmoil in today's world. The outbreak of war in Kosovo sounded a resounding alarm. A regional military organization, in the name of humanitarianism and human rights, bypassed the United Nations to take large-scale military actions against a sovereign State, thus creating an ominous precedent in international relations. This act was a violation of the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized norms governing international relations. It has eroded the leading role of the United Nations in safeguarding world peace and security and gravely undermined the authority of the United Nations Security Council. During that war, the Chinese Embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was bombed, which caused heavy casualties and much loss of property. It was an incident such as has rarely been seen in diplomatic history, and naturally roused the utmost indignation of the entire Chinese people and the strong condemnation of the international community.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has held a clear and consistent position on the issue of Kosovo. We seek no selfish interests and are only upholding justice. For the sake of peace, we maintain that the Kosovo issue should be resolved through peaceful negotiations on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and with guarantees of the legitimate rights and interest of all ethnic groups in Kosovo. We are opposed to the use of force under any pretext.

Mankind is on the threshold of the twenty-first century. Where should the world go? What kind of new international political and economic order should be established? These are urgent questions facing the Governments and the peoples of all countries.

The world is undergoing significant and profound changes. A changed world calls for a corresponding new international political and economic order. World peace and development demand the establishment of a just and reasonable new international order, which is the common aspiration of the international community. It should be based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized principles governing international relations. In this connection, I wish to highlight the following points.

The first relates to sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of others. Such arguments as human rights taking precedence over sovereignty and humanitarian intervention seem to be in vogue these days. Some countries have even put such arguments into practice. We believe that it is the sacred duty of all Governments to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that all countries have an obligation to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of their own peoples in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international human rights instruments, and in the light of their respective national conditions and relevant laws. But as political systems, levels of economic development, history, cultural background and values vary from country to country, it is only natural that countries should have different interpretations and even diverging views on human rights. Countries should engage in dialogue and exchanges on the basis of equality and mutual respect so as to better understand each other, expand common ground and handle their differences properly, rather than resort to confrontation or interference in the internal affairs of others under the pretext of human rights.

The issue of human rights is, in essence, the internal affair of a given country, and should be addressed mainly by the Government of that country through its own efforts. Ours is a diversified world. Each country has the right to choose its own social system, approach to development and values that are suited to its national conditions. The history of China and other developing countries shows that a country's sovereignty is the prerequisite for and the basis of the human rights that the people of that country can enjoy. When the sovereignty of a country is put in jeopardy, its human rights can hardly be protected effectively. Sovereign equality, mutual respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of others are the basic principles governing international relations today. In spite of the major changes in the post-cold-war international situation, these principles are by no means out of date. Any deviation from or violation of these principles would destroy the universally recognized norms governing international relations, and would lead to the rule of hegemonism; if the notion of "might is right" should prevail, a new gun-boat policy would wreak havoc, the sovereignty and independence by virtue of which some small and weak countries protect themselves would be jeopardized and international peace and stability would be seriously endangered.

The Kosovo crisis has proved that to engage in so-called humanitarian intervention in a sovereign State with neither a mandate from the Security Council nor the prior

consent of the country concerned will cause a greater humanitarian catastrophe instead of resolving the problem. In view of this, under the current circumstances, the principles of respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of others must be effectively strengthened rather than weakened in order to maintain world peace and stability.

The second principle is the pacific settlement of international disputes. This principle, initiated by the Hague peace conference 100 years ago, is now an important principle of the United Nations Charter and a basic principle of contemporary international law. History shows that deviation from this principle over the past century has led to, "the scourge of war, which twice ... has brought untold sorrow to mankind", and to foreign aggression, which has inflicted tremendous suffering on the peoples of a number of countries. In the current international situation, adherence to the principle of the pacific settlement of international disputes is still highly relevant to the contemporary world.

The pacific settlement of international disputes is predicated on the non-use and non-threat of force in international relations. We maintain that handling State-to-State relations with the mentality and modalities of "hot" wars, cold wars, power politics or bloc politics will get nowhere. All international disputes and regional conflicts should be resolved in a fair and reasonable manner through peaceful negotiation and consultation on the basis of equality, rather than through the arbitrary use or threat of force based on the power of military superiority. Only in this way can fundamental solutions to disputes or conflicts be found without complicating or aggravating them or leaving behind a hidden peril. And only in this way can States coexist in harmony and achieve common development. This is the only way to lasting peace and stability in the world. Otherwise, the world will never be a tranquil place.

The third principle relates to strengthening the role of the United Nations and preserving the authority of the Security Council. The role of the United Nations is indispensable for the achievement of genuine peace and development and for the establishment of a just and reasonable new international order. Strengthening the role of the United Nations is in line with the historical trend; it meets the needs of the times and conforms to the shared aspiration of all the world's peoples. In order to strengthen the role of the United Nations, efforts should first be made to uphold the sanctity of the purposes and principles of the Charter. The most important reason why the United Nations has been able to grow from 51 founding Members to its current size is that it has acted according to these purposes and principles. Those purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations have already taken deep root in international practice and form a legal basis on which peaceful and friendly relations between countries are guided. It is the view of the Chinese Government that despite the great changes that have taken place in the international situation, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter are still relevant. We are opposed to any irresponsible interpretation or revision of them, with whatever excuse.

If the United Nations role is to be strengthened, the authority of the Security Council must be preserved. According to the provisions of the Charter, the Security Council shoulders primary responsibility for safeguarding international peace and security. It has been proved that the role of the Security Council is irreplaceable. Given the current circumstances, it is imperative to preserve its authority and leading role. Any act to weaken this authority or to impose the will of an individual country or a group of countries on the Security Council is very dangerous. Instead of contributing to the maintenance of peace, it will further breed power politics and hegemonism and will give rise to endless troubles.

If the United Nations role is to be strengthened, it is essential to ensure that all Member States have the right to equal participation in international affairs, so that their reasonable propositions will be fully reflected and their legitimate rights and interests protected by the United Nations. Decisions adopted by the United Nations must give expression to the common will of the majority of its Member States. Any attempt by a few countries or a group of countries to monopolize world affairs and decide the destiny of the people of other countries goes against the trend of the times and will never succeed.

Fourthly, we must foster a new security concept and safeguard international security. The old security concept is based on military alliance and arms build-up and does not help safeguard international security, still less build a lasting peace in the world. In today's world it is necessary to foster a new security concept that satisfies the needs of the times and to explore new ways of maintaining peace and security. The core of the new security concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the purposes of the United Nations Charter are the political foundation for the maintenance of international security, while mutually beneficial

cooperation and common development constitute its economic guarantee. Dialogue on an equal footing, full consultation and peaceful negotiations are the right way to maintain international security.

Relaxation in the international situation and the disarmament process are complementary to each other. It is regrettable, however, that some recent negative developments in the international situation have seriously hindered the healthy development of the disarmament process. How to promote the disarmament process, prevent an arms race and safeguard international security have become pressing concerns for the international community. We are opposed to any attempt, on the basis of excuses that are not genuine, to seek military strength that goes beyond a country's legitimate defence needs. We are also opposed to any attempt to restrict and weaken other countries in the name of disarmament and non-proliferation in order to seek absolute, unilateral security supremacy for one country or group of countries. We call on the international community to take the new security concept as a guideline and wholeheartedly promote the healthy development of the disarmament process, in the interest of world peace and security.

Fifthly, we must reform the international economic system and promote the common development of all countries. The old and irrational economic order has seriously impeded the sound development of the world economy, further widening the wealth gap between the North and the South. The East Asian financial crisis that broke out two years ago has affected many countries in the world. To prevent financial risks and ensure economic security has become an urgent task facing many countries, especially the developing countries. The world economy is an interrelated and indivisible whole. All members of the international community should take a responsible approach and, in a spirit of risk sharing, strengthen their cooperation and jointly promote a steady growth of the world economy.

Therefore, it is necessary to reform the current international economic and financial systems. The United Nations and the international financial institutions should earnestly construct a framework to prevent and overcome financial and other economic risks. Accordingly, the developed countries should take on more obligations. The developing countries have the right to equal participation in world economic decision-making and the formulation of relevant rules. In the new round of negotiations that will soon begin in the World Trade Organization, the reasonable demands of developing countries should be fully reflected. Cooperation should be strengthened on the basis of mutual benefit. No country should prejudice other countries' economic security and development by virtue of its economic, technological and financial advantages. We should all oppose trade discrimination, the rich bullying the poor and the arbitrary resort to economic sanctions or the threat of sanctions against other countries. The developed and developing countries both have their own advantages and should learn from each other to make up for their deficiencies so as to achieve common sustainable development.

Moreover, on such global issues as the environment, population, poverty and debt the developed countries should not shirk their responsibility and obligation; rather, they should take the lead in providing technological and financial assistance to the developing countries. We deem it necessary for the United Nations to hold a special conference at an appropriate time to discuss the globalization of the world economy, in order to promote international cooperation in this field and to achieve common prosperity.

The People's Republic of China will soon celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. For half a century, especially in the last 21 years of reform and opening-up, earth-shaking changes have taken place in China, and the Chinese people have scored tremendous achievements in socialist economic, political and cultural development as well as in diplomatic and other endeavours. Following Hong Kong's return to the motherland the year before last, the Chinese Government will soon resume the exercise of sovereignty over Macao. At present, China enjoys political stability, sustained economic growth, national unity, social tranquillity and progress. Although difficulties and serious challenges still lie ahead, we are confident and capable of overcoming the difficulties, rising to the challenges and forging ahead with every aspect of the socialist cause of building a strong, prosperous, democratic and culturally advanced country.

In the face of international vicissitudes, the Chinese Government will steadfastly take up economic development as the central task, resolutely press ahead with reform and opening up, consistently maintain social stability and unswervingly pursue an independent foreign policy of peace. We are willing to continue to develop friendly relations and cooperation on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence with all other countries in the world and to make our due contribution to safeguarding world peace and promoting common development.

The Chinese Government and people will, as always, resolutely safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and will continue to advance the great cause of national reunification. It is a fact universally recognized by the international community that there is only one China in the world, that Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory and that the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing the whole of China. China's territory and sovereignty are absolutely indivisible. The ultimate reunification of the motherland represents the common aspiration and firm resolve of all the Chinese people, including our compatriots on Taiwan. No force can hold us back in this great cause.

The Chinese Government will continue to adhere to its established policy for settling the question of Taiwan. We are firmly opposed to any efforts to create "independence for Taiwan", "two Chinas", or "one China, one Taiwan". All moves to divide the motherland are doomed to failure. China's great cause of national reunification can and will be accomplished.

A few days ago a powerful earthquake shook China's province of Taiwan. This earthquake caused heavy loss of life and property damage for our compatriots in Taiwan. We are extremely concerned about this catastrophe and express our sympathy to our compatriots on the island. We also express our condolences to the families of the victims of the earthquake. People on both sides of the strait are brothers and sisters in one big family. The disaster that hit Taiwan and the pains of our compatriots on the island are shared by the entire Chinese people. We will provide every possible support and assistance to alleviate the harm caused by the earthquake.

I take this opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly and the international community as a whole for their sympathy, condolences and assistance.

The twenty-first century is dawning. The future of the world is bright, and the new century is bound to be a more splendid one than this. The Chinese people stand ready to work with the people of other countries for the establishment of a just and rational new international order, for peace and development in the new century, and for the overall progress of human society.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly; it is a sure guarantee of success for the fifty-fourth session. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Didier Opertti, the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, for his exemplary management of the Assembly's work during the past year.

On the many issues facing the General Assembly in the year to come, Italy shares and supports the statement made yesterday by the Foreign Minister of Finland speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The last few years of this century have disproved the notion that people and human freedoms take second place to State sovereignty. In Kosovo and East Timor a coalition of States resorted to the use of force, but not for self-seeking national interests, not to defend their borders, not to impose new hegemonies.

The end of the nuclear nightmare has coincided with a rampant proliferation of local conflicts, terrorist acts and traumatic economic and financial crises. Can the end of communism have given peace to former cold-war enemies and conflict to the rest of the world? The cold war brought a precarious, imperfect peace. Was that preferable to the tragic series of conflicts that have embroiled humanity over the past 10 years? The division of Europe helped neutralize tensions throughout the planet. Does this mean that nuclear weapons brought about a period of unprecedented stability, and — as some have suggested, paradoxically — that we should award the Nobel Peace Prize to the bomb? The breakdown of the former international order has created a plethora of new States. Does this mean that dividing the world in two was the only way to grant common citizenship to peoples and religious groups that have never learned the art of peaceful coexistence? The international community now takes military action to deal with tragedies that only a few years ago would have left us indifferent, and yet we are still influenced by military assessments, strategic interests, regional solidarity, public opinion and the magnitude of any human rights violations. How can we act according to more precise rules, based primarily on the duty of States to protect the rights of individuals?

The crises that have broken out in recent years have raised agonizing dilemmas and difficult questions that demand answers. It would be wrong to use the imperfections of the international system as an excuse for inaction. But it would also be wrong to ignore the new demands for certainty and the rule of law: the greatest

challenge is how to relate authority to law and lay down codes of conduct and political discipline that reconcile power with legitimacy.

Allow me to articulate a set of principles that could guide our action in the new century. First, we should enhance crisis prevention rather than conflict suppression. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has rightly observed that we must eradicate the cultural and economic causes of conflicts and that a culture of conflict prevention must prevail over the culture of conflict suppression. We know what these causes of conflict are: the huge gap between the living standards and incomes of different classes and nations; the exponential increase in mass migration from poor to rich countries; cultural difference and the conflicts and fanaticism it triggers; criminal acts for the sake of glorifying or even creating a nation. These are the four horsemen of the contemporary Apocalypse.

Secondly, we should use force only as a last resort. Arms should be used to stop criminal behaviour only when economic and political instruments are inapplicable or have failed. Ten years ago, these same instruments brought down totalitarian communism, which was a more formidable enemy than today's tyrants. In the Balkans and in East Timor, peacekeeping operations were launched to address serious, massive and systematic violations of human rights. The decisions to intervene were made after repeated demands that the culprits end a state of illegality; after an exhaustive and fruitless search for a diplomatic solution; and by a group of States rather than by a single Power.

We are living in an age of unfinished wars. In Iraq as in Serbia, authoritarian rulers have been seriously weakened, but they are still in power. How and how much can sanctions be used to replace or complement the use of force? Perhaps we need clearer international strategies and rules that pay heed to the most vulnerable members of society, to the political opposition and to the risk of strengthening despots through sanctions. Our focus should be more on incentives than on sanctions.

Thirdly, we need to define rules. No one knows the size or shape of the next challenge. But our response must be dictated by respect for universal principles rather than by a balance of power. We must beware of conjuring up the spectre of international law as the law of the strongest. We must beware of making some countries more equal than others. To do so would run counter to our best political and cultural traditions, in which the law is meant to protect the weak.

The Western world and the Euro-Atlantic institutions are no threat to anyone's integrity, prosperity and freedom. But we must perfect the instruments that uphold the international rule of law. We must spell out the duties of States. We must create a fully fledged corpus of case law on universal human rights. We must work out rules and procedures that will justify the erosion of sovereignty in the name of global responsibility. This is why every country must make it a priority to ratify the international instruments for safeguarding human rights. I am thinking in particular of the International Criminal Court, which was instituted in Rome in June of last year. These instruments should be reflected in our national legislation and practice. Finally, we should encourage the involvement of our own institutions. It is in this spirit that we have invited the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, to address the Italian Parliament.

Until human rights are firmly institutionalized, doubts will remain over the relationship between legitimacy and effectiveness. The gradual construction of universal citizenship is a learning process to which we all should contribute. Otherwise we shall be racing towards fragmentation, seeking forms of independence that are not economically viable and that are vulnerable to others' desire for hegemony.

Fourthly, we must learn to appreciate the judgement of others. I would like to quote, in this respect, one of the founding fathers of American democracy, James Madison. He said:

> "An attention to the judgement of other nations is important to every government for two reasons. The first one is that, independently of the merits of any particular plan or measure, it is desirable, on various accounts, that it should appear to other nations as the offspring of a wise and honourable policy. The second is that, in doubtful cases, particularly where the national councils may be warped by some strong passion or momentary interests, the presumed or known opinion of the impartial world may be the best guides that can be followed."

Today's world has acquired a new sensitivity. It will no longer tolerate the oppression of the weak. This implies a rethinking of the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference that have governed the community of nations for over three centuries, beginning in Europe. But we must avoid double standards, applying

one yardstick to friendly countries and another to those that are not. This is what makes the ultimate sanction of the United Nations so indispensable, since an international legal standard cannot — except in exceptional temporary situations — be the prerogative of any single group of States.

When we defend the rights of others, we cannot pretend that the lives of our own people are not also at risk. By the same token, it would be inconsistent not to place the same value on other human lives as we do on our own.

Every culture and tradition must be involved in the defence of liberties and freedom. We cannot ignore the regional dimension of human rights, whose inviolable universal character can be enriched by the varieties of historic experiences. But stalemates and the paralysis of intersecting vetoes must be avoided by anchoring even the strongest States to a system of rules and principles, balancing their power against the effectiveness and strength of the international institutions.

Fifthly, we should strengthen the institutions. The aftermath of the cold war has proved that large political and economic groupings can more easily guarantee ethnic coexistence, religious tolerance and economic advancement. This should be kept in mind whenever pressure builds to release the genie of self-determination from the bottle of State sovereignty.

Only the great institutions, whether regional — such as the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance — or universal — such as the United Nations — can close the gap between democratic codification of laws and their effective enforcement. Unless we have a strong institutional network, every peacekeeping operation could end up looking as if we were taking the law into our own hands. Everyone would feel as if he should look out only for his own security, leading to a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, let us resume the disarmament talks, as President Clinton proposed in his statement yesterday, and place our common security on more solid foundations.

There is one lesson to be learned from these years of turmoil: actions to prevent and repress the most serious violations of human rights may take precedence over respect for national sovereignty. No Government can hide behind the shield of its own borders. Legitimacy demands the redefinition of relations between States and the international community. It demands the reformulation of the principle of non-interference, which has sometimes allowed States to neglect their duties towards their citizens. Although the United Nations is an organization of States, the rights and the ideals it protects are those of individuals.

I have listed some rules that will help redefine coexistence among peoples through the work of the United Nations. We live in a world in which threats against one group immediately affect every other group and impel them to take responsibility, a world in which the concept of non-interference can no longer be invoked to obstruct action in the face of serious violations of fundamental rights. We must ask ourselves how to address all these changes, for the sake of closer and more equitable international cooperation.

Of course, States will continue to have different perceptions of national interests, and there will be a continued need to reconcile them peacefully. But for the United Nations to meet the challenges of the new century, our codes of conduct must be placed within a more solid institutional framework. The United Nations Security Council should be made more representative and democratic in composition, in line with proposals of a number of Member States. All the citizens of the world should be able to identify themselves with the United Nations and feel a part of its decision-making and law-making processes; this for the sake of universal sovereignty, which is not the prerogative of a few, but the right of all.

The cold war represented an international order dominated by two super-Powers and held in check by nuclear weapons. Today's world is economically more united, but politically more divided. The watchword of the economy is deregulation. But politics requires rules if we do not want anarchy to prevail. Unlike the market, in politics no invisible hand can generate peace and prosperity. What we need is a visible hand that enacts rules and regulations, and obliges States to respect them, both beyond their borders and in the treatment of their citizens. Let us make the United Nations the visible hand of peace and prosperity. This may be the greatest challenge awaiting us. We must face it together, here in this forum, and place it at the centre of the upcoming debate on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century.

The President: Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I should like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General

Assembly at its third plenary meeting, on 17 September 1999, the list of speakers will be closed today at 6 p.m.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs of San Marino, His Excellency Mr. Gabriele Gatti.

Mr. Gatti (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I wish to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. You represent a geographical region, the African continent, which can significantly contribute to identifying the major causes of world problems and help to evaluate their effects. You can lead this Organization towards desirable and concrete results.

A particular acknowledgment goes to President Didier Opertti. San Marino had the opportunity and privilege to work in close cooperation with him and to ascertain his undeniable and extraordinary skills and the remarkable accomplishments reached during his mandate.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the three new States which have recently joined the big family of the United Nations. I am deeply convinced that countries never involved in wars possess an inestimable richness and can transmit to the whole world their history of peace and tolerance, helping us reach the goals set forth in the preambular paragraphs of the Charter.

The Republic of San Marino believes that the United Nations is, and must remain, the forum for international negotiations best suited to the nations' expectations. We reiterate its central role in the prevention and management of international crises, particularly in the field of peace and security, through the necessary updating process of its main operative organs, and primarily the Security Council, which should never be delegitimized.

The Council's reform, in the context of a larger reform of the United Nations system, is a fundamental step in the construction of the new international structure. The reform originated from the need to update the composition and the *modus operandi* of the most important United Nations organ to operate in a deeply changed international environment.

We are particularly thankful to the Secretary-General for courageously proposing, and partly already accomplishing, a complete, wide-ranging programme of reforms to strengthen the United Nations. This programme will progress because only an Organization in constant evolution will be able to prevent, in some cases, and to tackle, in others, the challenges of the next millennium.

San Marino feels internationally responsible and it feels the need to mobilize all its strength to find solutions of solidarity to the serious problem of the external debt of developing countries.

Faced with 3 billion people who still live with less than $2 a day, faced with 130 million children without access to education and 1.5 billion people without drinking water, we must support action aimed at creating sustainable development and healthy economic policies. The imbalance between rich and poor countries must not become irreversible, with tragic consequences for all humankind.

San Marino shares and supports the series of programmes and plans announced and applied by creditor countries and by the major world financial institutions to tackle this serious emergency. Programmes and plans have so far shown themselves to be insufficient to tackle the problem of debt in a decisive way.

We hope that the United Nations will intensify the debate aimed at an equitable and durable solution to the problem. In particular, we hope that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council will represent the best laboratory of ideas for its definition. San Marino shares the ethical approach to the situation through solidarity and development. We believe this will give more hope to the people affected by this heavy burden.

In the past year the Republic of San Marino was one of the first countries to ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court, convinced that such an institution is indispensable for the future world order. In international society, it represents not only a political advance, but moral progress, too.

The Republic of San Marino has recently established a permanent court of arbitration, trusting it will become a trustworthy and impartial international instrument for the resolution of national and international disputes. We are convinced that such an instrument will be duly evaluated by all Member States of the United Nations and that they will shortly be able to subscribe to a proper convention. We further believe that this initiative could represent a significant contribution by our country to the international community.

At the outset of the third millennium, we still find disconcerting the coexistence of a large, consolidated corpus of humanitarian laws and human rights and the spread of atrocities beyond all limits, affecting almost exclusively civil populations, mainly women and children.

The international community can rightly state that it has reached goals in the field of humanitarian law and human rights that were unimaginable 50 years ago. However, these considerable goals have been reached only with the simultaneous application of established rules. In this regard, we appreciate the tireless work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, aimed at filling the deep gap between legality and accepted practice, and at underlining the absolute need in the community of States for the full application of and respect for, international law. San Marino has great expectations of the future World Summit for Children.

In every country and in every culture there are messages of peace which are often forgotten, neglected or ignored. It is the responsibility of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, and all of us to rehabilitate those messages through the awakening of our conscience and the application of a universal culture of peace. This will happen if we are able to courageously identify and defeat the seeds of violence.

Therefore, we have to decide now what culture we want to defend: a culture where violence is considered an inevitable evil from which we can only protect ourselves, or a culture where violence can and must be eradicated.

The preamble to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which includes the words,

> "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed",

remains today, in our opinion, the right perspective, because peace-building through dialogue, education and acceptance of differences is the best guarantee for the survival of humanity.

We all know that there are 45 armed conflicts going on at this very moment all over the world. Sadly, the spilling of stains of hate and violence constantly destroys the hope that humanity will soon prepare to use the so-called "peace dividend", resulting from the end of the balance of terror between the super-Powers, for positive goals.

The Republic of San Marino deeply appreciates the recent Security Council resolution expeditiously establishing a multinational peace force to change the situation in the East Timor crisis. What the United Nations is starting is a risky mission, but it will contribute to increasing the role and dignity of the United Nations, underlining its force as an impartial and neutral institution deploying itself as a bulwark against prevarication to defend the life and the dignity of humankind.

It is with great satisfaction that the Government of San Marino acknowledges the renewed impetus and momentum of the Arab-Israeli peace process negotiations. San Marino regards with equal satisfaction the present search for political solutions at the end of the Balkans conflict, activating a channel of concrete solidarity for the population of Kosovo.

The people of San Marino sadly regret to see that the important and topical question of the death penalty has not been included in the General Assembly's agenda. San Marino intends to continue to voice its protest against capital punishment, firmly convinced that the abhorrent instrument of death consciously and legally inflicted by one human being on another can be considered neither a valid and effective answer to defend society nor a deterrent against the spreading of criminality.

On behalf of the Government of San Marino, I wish to acknowledge once more the focal role of the United Nations with respect to the major challenges at the end of this millennium and the momentum that the greatest international Organization can provide for a new century, in which the supremacy of a culture of peace over a culture of war, of a culture of life over a culture of death, of the full realization of human dignity over its systematic violation, will prevail.

It is in this spirit that I wish good work to you, Sir, and to all the members of the Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.